

# A Seasonable VVord,

## Or a Plain and Tender-Hearted EPISTLE

T O

All Sincere Hearts in *Parliament*,  
*Army*, and *Countrey*, who have any wil-  
ling, though weak desires to glorifie their Hea-  
venly Father in their holy Conversations.

Wherein is briefly urged, that Gods doing calls  
for the Saints Duties; Experience of Divine Love  
requiring Christians seriously to eye it, and in their Hearts  
and Lives to Act in a Suitableness to it.

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By *Thomas Hearne*, A friend to the Truth.

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Luke 1. 74, 75. *That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all our dayes.*

1 Chron. 31. 25, 26. *But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit received, for his heart was lifted up. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself.*

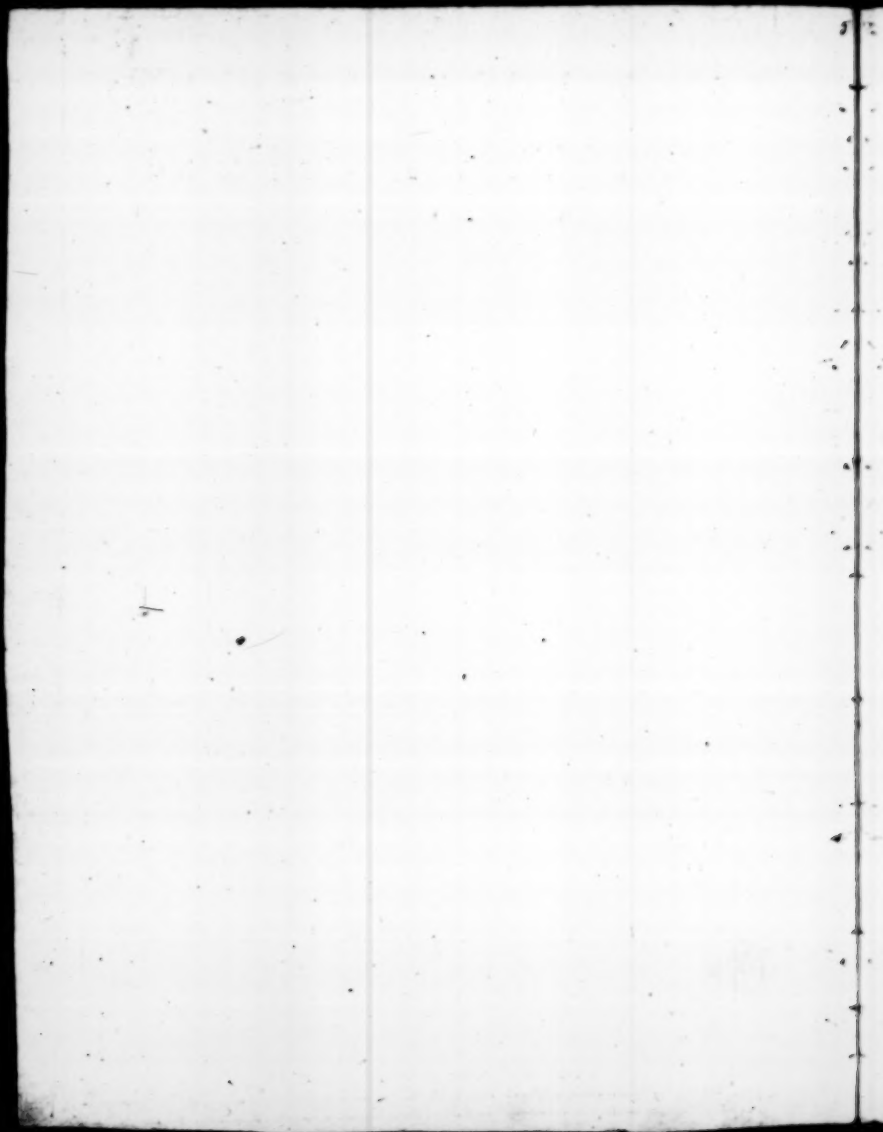
Jer. 9. 9, 10. *Will you walk after other gods, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations.*

Matt. 15. 8, 9. *These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, but in vain do they worship me.*

Isa. 5. 8. *They chose new gods, then was War in the gates.*

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## A Word to the People, and two Words to the A R M Y.

*Dear friends,*



On whose hearts God hath touched, into whose hearts the glorious light of the Lord Jesus hath shined, cannot but (and that with grief of soul) confess with me, That as it was foretold by our Saviour, who knew things as well in their events, as beings, That the love of many should wax cold; *Mat. 24.* So may we say now in our sad and dismal dayes, that love to, and zeal for God and godliness is quite decayed, Christians alas every where falling into spiritual consumptions apace; Holiness, that glorious ornament of the Gospel, is now by some laid as a garment out of fashion; watchfulness over our corrupt hearts and crooked wayes is by some (who, I think not presumption to say, were never fully acquainted with the pretious excellency of Gospel truths, nor the deceitfulness of their self deceiving hearts) laid aside, As a poor, legal, carnal employment; but tis no wonder to see the father of lies to insnare such, who are easily turned aside from the good old way of spirituall stedfastness. Such as are of roving minds, do seldom bottom on any thing (whiles such) that may be called eminent and solid: Philosophical subtleties do most take with airy and critical spirits, empty notions quiet that heart, though different from the rule too, who is ignorant of the glory of the Lord in truth resting on his soul; Satan transforms himself into the likeness of an Angel of Light, to keep poor souls from knowing and injoying that light, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Seeing now that vanity so abounds, and folly hath gotten a seat, which

heretofore was a footstool to truth; although I am conscious to my self of mine own weakness, and not ignorant neither, how in laying out my self to publique view, I shall be exposed to the judgment of many outside Christians, and therefore critical spirits, yet notwithstanding all these pleas of Satan, and mine own carnal heart to the contrary, I have adventured abroad, referring the event of this my sincere and retired endeavors to advance the glory of God, to him alone, who by his Arm makes weak things strong; Did not many able Christians both for parts and experiences, as I hope, more consult their own concerns than the glory of God, they could not be so dull in such a day as this is, when so few in sincerity plead for truth. I am sure there was another spirit in those sons of God to appear for truth of old; *Moses* aimed so at Gods glory, that he had rather dye then Gods hand should fall upon the *Israelites*, which would so redound to Gods dishonor. So *Paul* of the Jews, *Rom. 10. 1. The Lord lay not this sin to their charge*, Who are furnished with all suitable accommodations, and yet will not appear: but to my business. Friends, many of you have a long time tasted of mercy, How do you prize the God of mercy? Is he your praise, who hath been your Saviour? I am fearful of many of you, that you are almost drowned in forgetfulness of God; Christ was lovely to you, Is sin deadly now? The Cavaleers are gone out of your Counties, Doth corruption raige in your hearts? Doth the enjoymēt of peace ingage you to bleſs the God of peace? if not, whats the cause of this dismal change? Surely I see by your life what you love. Souls, be serious, and ask your hearts these questions.

1. Whether you walk as a people that own, and remember the mercies of God; you have been a long time under the wing of divine love, are you now warmed by the beams of the Sun of righteousness? you have much given from God in a way of grace, ah, what do you return in a way of practise? you have your desires granted, are your promises of glorifying God made good? Surely friends, rebellion still owned, and acted in such an age, of so much light, against a God of so much love, is lamentable indeed.

2. Whether your hearts, and resolutions are now as much ingaged against the unfruitful works of darkness as once they were? Is sin lovely now, which once was deadly? Is that your crown now, which once was your contempt? Is holiness your triumph now? Is God your end? is Scripture your rule? Try your hearts, and see whether you

you can say that Gods Word is your solace? sins ruine your rejoycing? Truly to know God, and not to affect God, is a knowledg which will bring miserable experience on us all at the last; tis a sad sign of a declining soul, when the pretious things of the Lord Jesus are lookt on as things indifferent, taken, or left, all alike; surely such never saw Christ in his Robes of gladness, who are more glad of sins reign, then of sins ruine; holy activity for God, and Truth once deadned, that soul is almost past recovery.

3. You my dear friends tell me, and put this to your hearts, whether such have any room in your hearts, who to our eye and conscience appear holy, exact, sincere, (though not of your judgment, as to the circumstantialis of the Gospel) time was when that pretious prediement was followed by you, *Mal. 3. 16. They that feared the Lord spake often one to another*; but now those that are not of your way, they shall have none of that food from heaven which God hath made you therefore Stewards of, that you might communicate to all of the household of Faith: I once thought this Truth to be Orthodox, that all that in sincerity love the Lord Jesus, should be of one minde, heart, and resolution, so far as to impart the minde of God each to other: Not meeting together, because not of one judgment, hath almost drawn on a general vail, either of carelesness, or prejudice, who otherwise are eminent, and sincere; if union with the Father be not a ground of communion with the Saints, let solid and experienced Christians judg.

4. Whether your contending for Subjects Liberty (though in its time, order, and season every way desirable) have not more made you the servants of sin then before; mistake me not, I say not so, pardon me, if I say it be my fear of many of my friends; what is freedom, if we we are led by the devil at his will? My dear friends let us not put the Cause before its Effect, Liberty of soul must be first; I know tis our best work: I do observe in my walkings abroad, that many cry, O what Tyranny do we groan under! (Tis true, Oppression where found, when felt, is a burden) I wish twere less where there's any; but yet let not us neglect our souls: Who cries out upon its corrupt heart? who sayes in seriousness, in humility, O I have the devil loading it within; whiles I cry out for liberty to my estate, my body, in my heart I am the servant to corruptions; Alas, what infatuated souls have we, thus to begin at the wrong end of our business; this tis to be ignorant of that, which if not

known, we shal be hurl'd from God as far as Satan and sin can cast us; Ah, do not mistake me, I am far from censuring any, my confidence drawn from experience of many of you is, that God hath really begun his good work on you: all that I contend for is this, that you that have so long lived in the Court, the Presence, the special Presence of God, that you should now look again with affectionate glances on your *Dalilahs*, your bosom-corruptions, shal not this Proverb be verified on you? I hope it shall, *The burnt childe dreads the fire*; have you not smarted for sin heretofore, if not, call out your weepings, sobs, sighs, bemoanings, were not these on this account? O my heart is hard, my affections frozen, my wil perverse, was it not for this end, that the pleasant face of God might shine on you? have you an answer to your cravings, and will you now be wanton? Are you come so neer the Land of Rest, and now will you to *Egypt* again? Ah friends, shall I write with Tears, or Ink? truly tis no time of dallying, tis good to examine your selves; take *Pauls* grave Exhortation, *Try your selves, know you not that Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates?* God must be the King of your hearts, or else your walkings must have the character of hell on them; you cannot but know that Christ scorns to have sin, his irreconcilable Enemy, his Competitor; tis his design to destroy the works of the devil abroad in the world, will he leave him your hearts, if you are his, to command in then? Is it not an affront to Royal Majesty to have a Rebel raig in any of his Dominions? It can never be that heaven should be in your hearts, and hell in your lives; that grace should be within, and yet turn the Gospel of grace into wantonness without, this is intollerable; as you are in heart, you will be in life; there may be a form of godliness without the power, the power of godliness can never be without the form; many may make a shew in the flesh, that are not sincere in heart; none can be sincere at heart but will glorifie God in their souls, and bodies, such indeed as are (as some to my grief are) who fetch their principles from their brains, have their experience in their brains too; heart-experience flows from Gods power, and presence in the heart: Indeed I have, in my retired hours, seriously pondered what might be the cause of these sad departings of Saints from the faith, and I finde these the causes.

1. Our not watching over our hearts; when these are not called to an exact account, (I can say this by sad experience) they will quickly cast in such temptations as will either deaden, or withdraw poor

poor souls from a cautious, exact, conscionable walking before God; a watchful Christian is not easily insnared; as long as souls are on their watch, Satan lyes close; but when security hath entertainement, then in comes Satan, and gives (if grace do not mightily work) a dreadful soyl; this is true in our experiences; when we feared sin, when we trembled at the least inclination to corruption, O then how holy were we! how eminent both in experiences, and practice; but since that time we are so stupified, and benumbed, that we are rather like stocks then Saints; a spirituall slumber fallen upon the best, and a spirit of prophaneness upon the most of us; no such way to soul ruin as security.

2. Another cause is this, Our pretended injoyment of God so in spirit, as that which engages us to live above ordinances; surely I have a little traced this and all other pretended injoyments of God, and have compared them with the Saints of old; and I finde the Scripture to speak to this sense, that all such as injoyed God most in spirit, were most of all others active in duty; to have any thing from God, and yet have no longing to bleſs the name of God, to injoy on earth so much of God, as not to crave for daily and constant supplies, in my judgment, favors of a soul that hath lived more upon reports, then injoyments: none know the sweetness of duties but such as still live above them in their faith, never without them in their practice. He that will not speak to the father by prayer, will hardly, in the constancie of his life, adorn the Gospel; thats not the Saints burden which is none but the Saints priviledge; he deserves, and that justly, to be a stranger to grace, who never put up his requests to the God of grace, for the pouring grace into his heart; daily addresses to the throne of grace, ~~at~~ the instrumentall means to procure sins death, and the Saints joy.

3. Another cause is, An affectate desire we have (more consulting with Satan, then the Scripture) to turn plain truths (chiefly such as come closest to the heart) into confused Allegories; and here we rest, all's a mistery, excluding hereby such words, and exhortations as do most call on us for a holy, and circumspect walking; Tis true, Scripture is so deep, that an Elephant may swim, so shallow and plain, that a Lamb may wade; profound lest prophane ones slight it, plain that the ignorant may imbrace it: Souls, have you not learned this yet, that tis Satans policy, chiefly this way, either to divert our hearts from, or darken our understandings in, the eying any solid

solid eminent truth, lest when the snare is discovered we escape; plain truths take most with honest hearts; Take this, All truths that do not, in their interpretation, point out Gods nature, holyness, and mans duty, are of the devils stamp, But

4. Another cause of this is, when we call all exhortations, serious cautions in Scripture, as legal and carnal; who is so blinde as not to see Satan here? let him possess our hearts with this, he hath us fast enough; let our souls bottom here, and then the devil hath his design effected. Ah dear friends, tremble at the serious consideration of this, that ever there should be any found professing the name of Christ, As to say holy exhortations are Legall. Ah, what deceitful hearts have we; because, as in other cases, some make their duties their God, therefore we must not perform duties to God. Friends, is holiness done away with the blood of Bulls, and Goats think you? was Christ crucified for you, and shall not, must not, sin be crucified in you? are exhortations useful as you are men, why not as you are Christians? but you need not these; If so, tis my joy that God hath the power of your hearts, if he save the glory of your conversations, you will put a high price upon exhortations; is he my enemy that tels me my state, labors my security? good God what an age is this! is sin grace, seeing cautions for sinners are legal! No wonder dear hearts there is so much folly amongst us, seeing the serious things of the Scripture have not so much of our thoughts, and meditations, as the scurrilous Epilogues of the most scandalous pamphlet; if the diavel be our prince, no wonder that his laws are obeyed; I once thought that an age of so much grace and goodness from heaven discovered, an age of so much light as this is, would never have witnessed to such a pish, and fantastick devices; that men, especially professors, should have no more staydness of spirit, but to handle, and talk of, Scripture as if it were but a carnal story, rather to please fancy, then settle judgments. I have but a word to you more; Friends take heed, God is a holy God, though we heed him not, be sure he is so jealous of his glory, that he will make all prophane mockers, one day smoak with the witness; though he be slow to wrath, yet when he comes, he is a consuming fire: be sober, be solid, be cautious; observe what I say, and the Lord give you to take good Councel.

And now my fellow-souldiers, a Word also to you, You have had  
God,



God amongst you, in your marchings, you have been active for God, your conversations have as really conquered as your Swords; Is there still the same activity in you for God as heretofore? your Quarters were blest in their injoyment of you, you were so eminent in grace, so active in holiness; are you so now? why is there complaining then? are you weary of well-doing, that now you must let sin in, and give life to it? which if kept out had been quite starved; do do you not know the Serpent hath its sting in Winter as well as Summer? sin will be as deadly to your souls, as your Swords (God owning you) have made you dreadful to your enemies: Friends bear with me a little, your souls I love, tis your sins I hate; God hath quell'd your enemies without, hath God killed your corruptions within? you are not free indeed till the Son make you free: Tis a true Paradox, a Conquerer in chains; you cannot be men for God and Truth, unless the God of Truth be in you: better (though grievous) to be subjects to the wills of men, then overcome by the wiles of our hearts; My dear friends, be serious now with me, and answer to these Queries.

1. Whether your victory over men without, or over sin within, doth most rejoyce you? I am short, be you serious, deal in the uprightness of your hearts: Christians who are so rejoyce more in the overcoming a lust, then in gaining an Empire. Let this be put home on your souls.

2. Whether you earnestly desire more for the settlement of the Nation, then the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ in the Nation? Do you more desire Peace without Truth, or Truth, though without Peace? which had you rather have, *Englands* distractions continued, or sins destruction hastened? before you put this paper into your pockets, let this truth sink into your hearts, weigh this.

3. Whether you seriously conclude, from former deliverances, and mercy which God hath given you the experience of (though now far beneath your former holy activity) that God will still prosper you? That God hath made you victorious, tis true, that God will make you successful, is uncertain; God will not delight in such as delight in sin. VVhen *Ephraim* spake tremblingly, he exalted himself in *Israel*, but when he sinned in *Baal* he died: I tell you, carnality, lukewarmness, and a late dethargy that is saln on you, will, like a rust, eat through your hearts, Armes, Victories, Counsels, Courages; and do that in a trice, which many hundred thousand ene-

-mies could never effect: if sin be embraced by you, you are not  
-either in your Arms, or power long-lived.

4. Whether you think that all your duties are done as Christians  
(when you have by your selves met together seeking God) though  
this be a great testimony that your hearts are after God, yet all this  
while, when amongst others you do not declare your experiences that  
you have been with Jesus: You that are commanders, Is there no  
command from Jesus Christ, think you, that you come short of?  
-Have you not souldiers? do you look that they obey you as they are  
-men? how can they obey in sincerity unless they are Christians? and  
-how shall they know how to obey, unless it be known who must be  
-obeyed? Why cannot you pray upon your Guards, exhort upon  
-your watches, as formerly? whats the reason? I hope you do not  
-count it a shame to name God.

You that are souldiers, was there not a time once, when in your  
marches the praise of God was in your mouths, and the fear of God  
in your hearts? was there not a time when prayers were more heard  
amongst you then curses? Surely, dear friends, you did scorn to be  
the devils underlings; I pray let God have your praise to whom you  
owe your lives, and in the name and fear of God be instructed: God  
-hath been your Rock, O now let his word be your Rule, and let it  
-appear that God hath roused you up now to prize him, praise him,  
-and pray unto him.

5. Whether you love them most, that you see love sin least? do you  
not make defection either in judgment, or experience, a ground of  
disaffection to their persons whom your souls, in private, tell  
you are indeed the Sons of God? tell me, do you strengthen  
-the weak? confirm the strong? Christ doth not break bruised  
-reeds, take heed, do not you tread on them. I beseech you  
let it not be said of you, that you embrace the devils brats, whiles  
= the kings children, the sons of God, are disregarded; he loves not  
= God, that loves not those that are born of God.

6. In your serious affairs, do you seriously make God your Coun-  
cellor? his word your rule? I hope you have lived so long some of  
-you, by faith, as not to make flesh your strength. Saints, as  
-they live above sin, they will not go to sinful courses to effect their  
-ends; he that makes hast without God, makes too much hast to speed  
-well; tempering with policy hath almost lost your glory; good  
-means are proportioned to upright-hearted ends. I have been  
long,

long, but tis that you and I might no longer tamper with sin. I have but a word of desire to you, pray take it as intended, it comes from my heart, the Lord put it on yours.

1. Make sincerity (as tis) your strength; surely this will make you invincible, tis a garment best pleases God of any; remember that precious place in the *Proverbs*, *He that walks uprightly walks surely.* *Pro. 10. 9.*

2. Be serious for God, come to talk of serious things with solid hearts: levity of spirit very ill becomes Christians, none are so soon ensnared as those that are flashy. *Pauls* advice might be useful to us, Be sober, and watchful; shewing none are more watchful then sober, serious Souls.

3. Take heed your lives, do not give your tongues the lie, to cry up God with the mouth, and cry down holiness in the practice, is lamentable; he that knoweth Gods will and doth it not, shall be beaten to purpose. Ah, live not by the dictates of this prince in the world, who is the God of the world: are you members of Christ? remember then your head is holy, gracious, loving; love one another, let union be your strength, let holiness appear in your conferences, ends, walkings.

4. Be constant in your professions, he that holds out is crowned; perseverance is that grace that wears the crown; you have gone through many hardships to get peace, you must go through more before you come into the Arms of the God of peace; take not holiness only for a season, but let it be your daily dress, prefer God above all self-advantages.

5. Appear against sin in your nearest relations; connive at sin in none, disclaim it, appear against it in all; love to God will loose a friends love rather then see God dishonored; if God be indeed in you, nothing will more gall your souls then his dishonor, more revive you then his glory.

6. Prefer principles before persons; love none so much as the lovers of God, close with none so intimately, as with those that conform to God; let those that be like God, be loved not verbally, but really, as such.

7. Be sure that you have a reverend esteem of, and put a weight upon, the least of Scripture-truths; every word there came from God, and hath glory, and majesty in it.

Now

Now friends I have done; take heed, lest by us *Galilees* carnal plea  
be taken up. He cared for none of these things. I shall say but a word  
or two, and so conclude. I may speak to your ear, tis Gods work to  
speak to your heart; words may be in print, but God must imprint  
truths on your heart, or twill never be powerful; my discourse is  
weak, yet no more nor less then truth; love to you hath made me  
dealt plainly with you, those that sooth you in your sins are but poor  
friends to your souls; some may despise me, and scorn my endeavors,  
but I will endeavor with my God to pray them into a better liking  
of God and truth; Many pamphlets may come to your hands, O that  
truth might come to your hearts; fancies and fables are for babies;  
wise men love truth. Now my dear friends, if there be any heart  
in you for God, any love to, zeal for God and truth, any long-  
ings to stop these bleeding wounds that are on the land, lay on,  
lay out all your powers, experiences, activities; improve every ad-  
vantage, let nothing be wanting. Surely, Gods presence with us,  
Gods spirit in us, Gods word guiding us, is that or nothing, that  
must solace, and secure us; if we cast off this, and follow the devices of  
our hearts, Wo and alas, the Lord have mercy on us, we are  
undone then for ever. My dear friends consider *Iohn 14. 6.* Christ is  
the way to the Father so as we cannot come to God but by him. Ah,  
the Lord keep us so in this way, that we may assuredly attain at last  
to the salvation of our souls, To which sincere request let all the  
lovers of the Lord Jesus say, Amen.

*Holineſs O Lord becometh thy house for ever : Psal 93. 5.*

FINIS.